

The Teenage Years

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Summary: April wonders what EverWorld may turn the group into.

Character directed.Go easy!

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Note: Rated PG for mildish language. It would make more sense if you read EW #3, but this is mainly character directed so no major spoilers.

My mother warned me once that the teenage years were going to be stressful.

That was the understatement of all time.

"What do you mean you can't eat lunch with us?!" 'Suela demanded.
"What, are we not good enough for you any more?"

I looked at the seven faces I knew so well. Becka, Elspeth, 'Suela, Jennifer, Magda, Allison, Tyra. We were sitting in a shady spot on campus, are usual "lunch spot". They were by turn, angry, surprised, disbelieving and hurt. "I mean that I can't eat lunch with you." I said. "I have a meeting."

"Oh, a _meeting._" Jennifer said. "And what meeting is this, please tell us?"

I sighed. "I'm helping some friends with an.. um... charity! Yeah, we're trying to raise enough money to...um.. bring the wolves back to

Yellowstone!"

'Suela raised an eyebrow. "April, honey the wolves were brought back into Yellowstone."

"And didn't you do that for a project in 5th grade?" Tyra asked skeptically.

"Um, well yeah, but we're trying to bring back... even more wolves!" If I ever needed my acting abilities I needed them now. Unfortunately I felt like I had lost all of them. I never dreamed of lying to my friends like this...

"More wolves, huh?"

"Yeah!" I said as enthusiastically as possible. "More! I mean, you can never have enough wolves, right?" I laughed... or what passed for laughter.

All seven stared at me.

"Ooookay." Magda said, finally breaking the silence. "April, you eat lunch with us everyday. What makes you want to abandon us now? You can tell us."

"What's wrong with you guys?!" I asked. "I mean, you're acting like elementary kids. God, I can't sit with someone else or you'll kick me out of your super special club? Look, I just want to eat with these guys for just. One. Day. Okay? I didn't know there was a contract saying I couldn't eat anywhere else!"
> They all got quiet.<p>

"April..." Magda said. "I'm sorry... We didn't know how much Senna's running away was going to stress you out."

It was my turn to stare. They were right! This was all about Senna. If Senna hadn't been missing I wouldn't be in this situation. But, good lord, I wish she had just disappeared from my life in the first place. Then I started to laugh. And laugh. I couldn't seem to stop. The group exchanged worried glances as I started to walk off to where Jalil, David, and Christopher were already sitting together.
> "Maybe you better go with her 'Suela." I heard Magda mutter. 'Suela jogged up to me. "Hey April, you all right?"<p>

I sighed. "I'm fine 'Suela." I said. We walked in silence for a minute. "Look... I'm really sorry I yelled at you guys. That was out of line."

'Suela shrugged. "No big thing." I smiled inwardly. She was trying to be nice. Not an effort she usually takes.

"So." she said. "Who you eating with today anyway?"

I pointed out Jalil, David and Christopher who we were slowly heading over to., They were reasonably far apart from most of the groups, who were too busy jabbering loudly to notice."Those three." 'Suela gave me a look. "All guys, huh?"

I laughed. "Don't get any ideas."

"Coulda picked a worse bunch I guess. I know him." She pointed to Christopher. "He's hilarious."

"Ooh, do I sense a crush?" I asked teasingly, trying to fall back into my normal self.

'Suela made a face. "Sorry, I don't go for the funny boys."

"What about the other two?" I asked.

She pointed to David, "Wannabe tough-guy." then Jalil "and nerd."

I frowned. "I see where the David-wannabe comes in, but Jalil's not a nerd."

"Whatever. He talks to like, no one in class. Sometimes I think he thinks he's better than us."

"He can be softer in the inside when you get to know him." I said. "He's not as cold as he seems. And very resourceful."

'Suela was about to say something when we reached David, Jalil and Christopher. "Well, seeya 'Suela." I said. "Don't forget to tell them I'm sorry."

When 'Suela walked off I turned to the group. David was glaring. "Where exactly have you been?!" he asked, trying to keep his voice steady.

I shrugged. "Got caught up."

"Caught up? Your EverWorld self could have woken up any minute! We need to have a meeting."

"Well sorry." I mumbled. "You know ,I'm trying to keep up my life."

David shook his head. "Why? For what reason? What do we really have here?"

"Friends!" I shouted suddenly. "Family! People who care about us! That's a major part of my life! I can't give it up just like that!"

"And why not?" David suddenly asked, softly. "Don't you realize, April? Our life isn't here any more. It's in EverWorld. That's where our focus should be."

"Oh really?! Then how come we're still here? Just because we have EverWorld to deal with does not mean that we can totally ignore our lives here."

"Yes it does." he answered hotly. "We don't have a choice."

"We don't?" Christopher spoke up. I had forgotten he was here. "We do have a choice: Forget it. Forget EverWorld and this whole screwed up thing. Let's just get out of EverWorld as soon as possible and forget it. Don't have a way out? We'll find a way." I was shocked to hear anger in his voice. No hint of humor or sauciness. Anger. Flat out anger.

"Christopher..." I said. "We have to stop EverWorld from coming here. The last thing we need is Huitzilopochtli in Chicago. We have to stay in EverWorld till we can put an end to it. Oh, and David, if you start smirking like you've won again, I swear I'll punch you." I paused. Was EverWorld really doing this to us? Was it going to make us nothing but a bundle of anger?

David glared at me for the second time that day. "April, I don't need this shit from you too, okay?"

"Me too? Heh. Jalil and Christopher been bothering you about Senna, huh? Good. Hope they knocked some sense into you."

"Why can't you trust her?" he shouted. "She is our key home!"

"We may need her," I said. "But that doesn't mean I have to trust her."

"Why not? Senna hasn't done anything to harm you. Nothing! She saved us!"

"Once." I said. "But I seem to have saved your asses a few times too. And I don't remember getting half the respect you've given Senna, David."

"I respect you!" David said. "But I'm beginning to wonder why. Senna has done nothing."

"Nothing?! Now that's a laugh. With out her we wouldn't be in this freakin mess in the first place!"

"This isn't Senna's fault." he said, reasonably calmly.

"Yes." I said. "It is. It all is."

"You're her sister!"

"Half sister." I said. "And she sure doesn't act like a sister towards me."

"That doesn't matter! You have to support her!"

"I don't have to do anything. But I am! I'm willing to help stop Ka Anor so that I can get home. I am! That doesn't mean I have to trust that bitch."

"What did you call her?" David asked steadily. But there was a dangerous tone to his voice.

"Bitch." I replied. I realized our faces were close together. You would of thought we were about to kiss if you hadn't seen us sending death threats with our eyes. I swear, I could practically see the tension between us stretching and crackling.

That's when Jalil stepped in between us. I was surprised. He had been silent ever since I sat down. "As much as I agree with what April's saying, I gotta break this up." Jalil said holding out his arms. I took a deep breath, and moved away from David. Jalil's eyes darted quickly from me to David and he shook his head. "This whole situation

is no good." he said. "I mean, what, EverWorld's got us turning against each other now? We got a whole slew of lunatic gods to deal with. What good is stopping them if we're turning into mini-Lokis ourselves, right?"

We didn't answer.

"Um, ahem, I said right?"

"Right." I mumbled. I looked at David. His eyes were to the floor. He bit into his sandwich. Finally he looked up. "Right." he said. A little reluctantly. Typical guy. His pride was hurt by giving up the fight.

"Good." Jalil said. "'Cause being the peacemaker gets annoying. Now I see where April's coming from." I sent him a grin, which he ignored. Though I think I saw a small smile forming. Of course that could of been wishful thinking...

"Well," Christopher said briskly, the anger mostly drained from his voice. "now that we're all a big happy family again, are we going to deal with this EverWorld crap or not?"

David sat up a little straighter. I could sense a long lecture about battle tactics coming up.

"Not!" I said cheerfully. I swung my bag over my shoulder and calmly walked over to where my friends were sitting.

I was afraid about what was coming up in EverWorld. I was afraid of what I was going to become in EverWorld and how David, Jalil, Christopher and me were going to change because of it. Would we become Mini-Lokis like Jalil said? Was that what day after day of terror and stress and fear could do to you? Penetrate who you really were, make you something else? Some alien creature?

Oh well. For now, I'm just going to enjoy the time I have left before I wake up. Just enjoy being with my friends.

Right after I take an advil.

End
file.